

Spiritual DNA: A Examination of the Church
A Church that Has a Love that Labors
1 Thessalonians 4:9-10

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Introduction: Last week we began looking at this idea that we are calling Spiritual DNA: An Examination of the Church. Our guiding text is 1 Thessalonians 1:3 which tells us that God gave thanks for this church which exhibited a faith that works, a love that labors, and a hope that lasts. Last time we focused on this matter of faith. This morning our examination reveals that every church ought to have a love that labors. Paul did not write as much about love as He did faith or hope, but as the text reveals, he felt as though love was rather self explanatory.

Text: ⁹ About brotherly love: you don't need me to write you because you yourselves are taught by God to love one another. ¹⁰ In fact, you are doing this toward all the brothers in the entire region of Macedonia. But we encourage you, brothers, to do so even more,

Introduction: A group of 4- 8-year-olds was asked, "What does love mean?" Here are some of their answers:

"When my grandmother got arthritis, she couldn't bend over and paint her toenails anymore so my grandfather does it for her all the time, even when his hands got arthritis, too. That's love." Rebecca - age 8.

"Love is when a girl puts on perfume and a boy puts on shaving cologne and they go out and smell each other." Karl - age 5

"Love is what makes you smile when you're tired." Terri - age 4

"Love is what's in the room with you at Christmas if you stop opening presents and listen." Bobby - age 7

"If you want to learn to love better, you should start with a friend who you hate." Nikka - age 6

"Love is when you go out to eat and give somebody most of your French fries without making them give you any of theirs." Chrissy - age 6

Our world struggles with defining real love. But even when we can define love correctly, we still struggle with being loving. Often times, the Church can struggle with what it means to love not only one another, but also loving those who are not a part of who we are.

Remember our phrase from 1:3, "a love that labors."

A church that has a love that labors understands that...

There is no lesson greater than God's love for us.

- God's love for us is the greatest expression of love.

Paul has already given evidence of God's love for the Thessalonians back in chapter one. In verse 4, the Thessalonians are reminded of their election by God and His love for them. In verse 10, Paul reminds that they have been rescued from the wrath of God. So, put these ideas together. He has chosen us. He has delivered us from the wrath of God. To the Romans, Paul declared that God demonstrated His own love for us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:8)

- God's love for us is the greatest example of how we should love others.

So, now that we have understood God's love for, this becomes the way that we are to love others.

- God's love for us is the energy by which we are able to love others.

We understand that the only way that we can love in this way is that we have been loved by God. "We love because He first loved us." (1 John 4:19)

The only way to love as He loves is to let Him love through us.

There are no limitations on the people we are to love.

The first part of verse 10 reveals the Thessalonians love for all. Again, here is an example of a church with a vibrant testimony. They loved all the brothers. Some people are harder to love than others, but we must love those folks too.

There is no level too high to love someone.

We are to excel in love. Regardless of where you are individually or where we are as a church, there is always room to grow in this area.

We began this morning with some funny sayings from children about the meaning of love. I close this morning with a story about what it really means to love someone—with a love that labors.

"A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him, beat him up, and fled, leaving him half dead. ³¹ A priest happened to be going down that road. When he saw him, he passed by on the other side. ³² In the same way, a Levite, when he arrived at the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. ³³ But a Samaritan on his journey came up to him, and when he saw [the man], he had compassion. ³⁴ He went over to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. ³⁵ The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, 'Take care of him. When I come back I'll reimburse you for whatever extra you spend.'" (Luke 10:30-35)